



New Vision

God's Plan Of Redemption • Ruth: A Woman of Strength • Ruth 3:1-18 • 5/20

Main Point

Ruth's small act of faithfulness led to a big reward for her and generations to come.

Getting to know me

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is your favorite story with a happy ending? (Movie, or Real Life)

Why do you think people love stories with happy endings? What is the formula for a happy ending?

At the end of a happy story, the good guys always win, and usually, the hero or heroine gets to be with their love interest. However, for any good story to be compelling, there have to be points in the story where the happy ending is doubtful. The hero gets into danger, or there is a terrible misunderstanding, or it just looks like the villain has all the odds stacked in his or her favor.

Ruth has a happy ending, but that ending is imperiled along the way. We worry about Ruth and Naomi having enough to eat. Ruth is warned not to go into any field but Boaz's, lest something bad happen to her. At the end, it looks like another man may marry Ruth instead of the hero Boaz. Through all the difficulties, Ruth finds the strength to persevere, and God uses her life in a surprising and beautiful way.

Into the Bible

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Ruth 3:1-7.

What do you think about Naomi’s advice? What does it say about Ruth that she took the advice?

Naomi wanted the best for Ruth, and she felt that going to Boaz was Ruth’s best chance of being cared for. Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer, and we know him to be a good man. Ruth wisely decided to follow Naomi’s advice. This dialogue between Naomi and Ruth not only highlights Naomi’s wisdom and Ruth’s bravery, but it also reveals the deep trust and love that they had for one another. Naomi, from the beginning, was worried about Ruth’s welfare, which is why she urged her to return to her family in Moab. Ruth refused to leave out of love for Naomi. The story of Ruth is a story of love, devotion, and honor—even amidst bleak circumstances.

| Have a volunteer read Ruth 3:8-18.

What do you think Ruth is asking of Boaz in verse 8? Does this phrase look familiar?

When Boaz first met Ruth, he praised her for staying with Naomi in order to help her survive. He said, “May the LORD reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge” (2:12). Ruth is using the same words that Boaz used in that blessing. Ruth is asking Boaz to be the fulfillment of the blessing that he wished for her.

Ruth and Naomi were in desperate poverty, and Boaz was one of the only people they could turn to for help. Boaz knows that Ruth came to shelter under the wings of the Almighty, but he did not know that God would wind up caring for Ruth through him. Boaz became the answer to his own prayer for Ruth.

Why do you think that Boaz says that Ruth “has shown more kindness than before” when she asks him to be their family redeemer?

Ruth’s pursuit of Boaz surprises him because he is an ‘older’ man. Though it was a sacrifice for Ruth to stay with Naomi and help her, she still could have sought another man who was younger, or perhaps richer. Instead, Ruth is willing to commit to Boaz as her family redeemer so that Elimelech’s name will not be extinguished from Israel. Ruth’s firstborn son would be considered the son of Boaz’s dead relative, and he would inherit all that belonged to Elimelech.

What does it mean for Ruth to be a “woman of noble character”?

We have seen that Ruth is loyal, faithful, and a hard worker. Interestingly, the phrase “noble character” that Boaz uses in 3:11 can also be translated as “strength.” This is the same Hebrew word used to describe the Proverbs 31 woman in Proverbs 31:29 to describe a “capable” woman. In the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Ruth follows the Book of Proverbs. Ruth is exactly the kind of woman that Proverbs 31:10-31 describes.

Have a volunteer read Ruth 4:9-10, 13-17.

Why did Naomi want everyone to call her “Mara” when she returned from the land of Moab? Does the narrator ever call her that? Why not?

Naomi’s name meant “sweet” in Hebrew, while Mara means “bitter.” Naomi felt that God had dealt bitterly with her, as she had lost her two sons and her husband. However, the narrator never calls her Mara, and neither does anyone in the story. At the end, we see that God’s blessing had indeed been with Naomi the entire time, and that Ruth had been better to her “than seven sons.” God gives Ruth a grandson, who she takes care of like he is her own son.

What is the historical significance of Ruth’s story? What does it mean for King David’s great-grandmother to be a Moabite?

It turns out that the story of Naomi and Ruth is not simply a beautiful tale of loyalty, faithfulness, and love. The story is about the great-grandmother of David the King, whose lineage would have the honor of bearing Jesus the Messiah. Ruth is a direct relative to Jesus Christ.

In Deuteronomy 23:3-4, it says that “no Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt.” Ruth did exactly what Moab should have done for Israel in Exodus. Ruth helped Naomi get back to her land, and she made sure that Naomi was well-cared for. Because of Ruth’s faithfulness, God brings a Moabite into the lineage of His own Son.

Ruth’s story ultimately serves to show us that God’s mercy and blessing extends to all nations. The grace of God has never been limited only to Israel, and has always been meant to be enjoyed by every tongue, tribe, and nation. Ruth probably had no idea that her love and faithfulness to God and to Naomi would have had such far-reaching consequences!

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What does it mean to be a “woman of noble character”? How can we encourage one another, and our daughters, to be women like Ruth?

Can you recall times in Ruth’s story when God providentially cared for her and Naomi? How can being reminded that God is always caring for us help us live faithfully?

Ruth's legacy of faithfulness led to the birth of Jesus Christ. How important is it to our children that we also live lives of faithfulness?

Pray

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to help us be a people of noble character. Pray that we will be a people who cares for others, and that when we give our word, we keep it. Ask the Lord to help us be faithful in the little things that come up in our daily lives, so that we may leave a legacy for those who come after us.

Commentary

| Ruth 3

3:1-3. In view of Boaz's relationship to the family and his kindness and generosity thus far to Ruth, perhaps he could be persuaded to take the further step of marriage. At the end of the barley harvest, in late May or June, the barley had to be winnowed, tossed into the air with a fork allowing the wind to carry away the lighter chaff while the heavier grain fell to the ground. At night, someone would guard the grain against being stolen or eaten by animals. Apparently, this was Boaz's night to be on duty. Dressing as Naomi instructed would not only enhance Ruth's attractiveness to Boaz but would symbolize an end to her period of mourning for her husband (2Sam 12:20), signaling her willingness to remarry.

3:4-7. Naomi instructed Ruth to go to Boaz when he was asleep and uncover his feet, or, more precisely, "uncover the place of his feet." By this act Ruth was inquiring about Boaz's willingness to fulfill the role of family redeemer, to take her as wife and provide for her.

3:8-9. Whereas her mother-in-law had anticipated Boaz taking the initiative in the conversation, Ruth responded to Boaz's question about her identity with a clarification of her purpose. She asked him to spread the corner of his robe over her as a symbolic statement of a marriage commitment (Ezek 16:8). The request also involved a wordplay, since spread your cloak over me literally means "spread your wing over me," inviting Boaz to become the answer to his own prayer in 2:12 that she might find refuge under the wings of the Lord.

3:10-11. Boaz's first words, my daughter, showed he had not been misled by the potential ambiguity of the situation. He declared himself willing to pay the social and financial costs of welcoming this despised outsider into his family. Boaz rightly saw Ruth's proposal as another act of covenant faithfulness (Hb chesed) on Ruth's part. Just as she had left her own household and her own family to be with Naomi, so now she was subordinating her own interests to those of Naomi. In the Hebrew ordering of the OT, the book of Ruth comes immediately after the book of Proverbs, which closes with a description of a woman of noble character (Pr 31:10).

3:12-13. Even though Boaz was a near relative of Naomi, there was another who had a prior claim to act as redeemer. Yet Boaz reassured Ruth that, one way or another, she (and Naomi) would be redeemed.

3:14-15. If it became widely known that Ruth had visited Boaz that night, people would wrongly assume that Boaz had taken Ruth as wife or that they were guilty of sexual impropriety. Boaz was unwilling to preempt his close relative who had first right of refusal to Ruth, so getting Ruth home before daylight kept wrong impressions from being formed. To seal his commitment (and perhaps also to provide Ruth with an excuse for being out so early), Boaz gave her six measures of barley. If the unspecified measures are seahs, then that would be around 80 pounds, an enormous load. Yet the lack of a measure may be intended to focus attention on the number six, which often represents incompleteness in the OT. Even this generous gift is incomplete. Ruth still awaited the final installment of “seed” that would accomplish her rest.

3:16-18. On Ruth’s return, Naomi asked her literally, “Who are you, my daughter?” This is the same question that Boaz asked in 3:8. Was Ruth merely an awkward and embarrassing duty to Naomi, or was she the one who would provide Naomi with an enduring place in the genealogies of Israel through the provision of a son? The answer depended on what transpired overnight. This was the real nature of Naomi’s question, as evidenced by Ruth’s answer.

|